

Machado de Assis' *Oliveira Twist*:  
Translation and the Making of a Novelist

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department  
of English and Comparative Literature.

Chapel Hill  
2007

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## Abstract

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(Under the direction of Madeline G. Levine)

In April of 1870, Machado de Assis was invited to translate Charles Dickens' first novel into Portuguese. The important task of introducing the celebrated *Oliver Twist* and his creator to a Brazilian audience was conferred upon Machado solely on his merits as a rising intellectual voice in Brazilian letters. Machado's idiosyncrasies as a translator range from a cavalier treatment of details, to what seem to be ideologically motivated narrative omissions. His procedures in these early years as a translator of Dickens are instrumental in the formation of his political and social consciousness as a mature novelist. I propose to trace in these early years not only the genesis of an elusive literary social political that would permeate his later novels and cause him much critique by his peers, but also to demonstrate the undeniable influence that such a close relationship with the British Victorian would have on the Brazilian Romantic.

*To Mark, my everything*

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1 .....	14
Chapter 2 .....	33
Conclusion .....	50
Works Cited .....	53

## Introduction

The most eminent service one can render to  
literature is to transport the masterpieces of the  
human spirit from one language to another.  
Madame de Staël

For the first twenty years of his writing career, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis devoted himself to the writing of poems, plays, articles for newspapers, and a few short stories. He also dabbled, like many of his contemporaries, in translation. These translations – which consist mainly of poems and vary from William Shakespeare to Alphonse de Lamartine, from Dante Alighieri to Edgar Allan Poe – have been, for the most part, ignored by Machadian scholars. Perhaps because they have been considered primarily as linguistic exercises, Machado's translations have failed to attract attention from scholars and critics. However, as the field of translation studies comes to occupy firmer ground in academic institutions and in scholarly inquiries, Machado's translations surface as important texts in and of themselves. Such is the case of *Oliveira Twist*, a

partial translation of Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* (1838), initiated and abandoned by Machado in the early part of 1870.

The translated text, collected and published by Jean-Michel Massa in 1965<sup>1</sup> as part of a collection of obscure and less-known writings by Machado, has also not attracted much interest from academia. With the exception of Ricardo Lísias, who recently 'finished' the translation and published it in 2002,<sup>2</sup> *Oliveira Twist* has been mentioned – if at all – only by Machado's biographers as proof of his dire financial situation after his wedding. Machado's rendering of Dickens' popular novel, however, merits much critical attention and an important place in his opus. Replete with modifications, errors, and authorial intervention, Machado's *Oliveira Twist* unmasks an idiosyncratic translator, who, though young in years, already struggles with concepts which have been attributed to his mature novels.

Machado's idiosyncrasy is captivating. Not interested in how well – or poorly – Machado performed the job of translating Dickens into Portuguese, I turn my attention to those places where Machado transcends Dickens' original text. It is the purpose of this essay to analyze Machado's translation of Dickens' novel and to try both to establish a taxonomy for his procedures as a translator and to examine the influence of Dickens' text on the young writer.

When Dickens began publishing *Oliver Twist* in 1837, he had already established himself as a literary figure in England. First with *Sketches by Boz* and then with *Pickwick*

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<sup>1</sup>See Jean-Michel Massa's *Dispersos de Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: MEC, 1965). *Oliveira Twist* is reprinted here in its entirety and annotated.

<sup>2</sup>See Ricardo Lísias' *Oliver Twist* (São Paulo: Hedra, 2002). Lísias, working from Machado's existing translation, translated the remaining chapters of *Oliver Twist*, maintaining the same register and cadence as Machado. The cover of the books reads: "Tradução de Machado de Assis e Ricardo Lísias." Machado translated the first twenty-eight chapters of the novel, Lísias the remaining twenty-five.

*Papers*, Dickens managed to create for himself a wide-ranging audience that awaited for the next adventure of the Dickensian Don Quixote with much anticipation. Selling around 40,000 copies per month, *Pickwick* increased Dickens' reputation as a comic genius, who was able to produce hilarious scenes about middle-aged men and their romantic and recreational scrapes. C. K. Chesterton claimed that *Pickwick*, nobler than a novel, gave the reader "a sense as of the gods gone wandering in England" (79). Dickens' use of humor in his earlier writings was partly responsible for his overwhelming success. As George Harry Ford argues, early Victorians were more receptive to laughter, despite their growing puritanism. Dickens' ability to appeal to them through his depiction of comical scenes was the most effective tool in building a varied readership in the early 1830s.<sup>3</sup>

His decision to trade the overtly comical for the serious and somber tone of *Oliver Twist* gained him mixed reviews and a much different reader reception than his previous writings. While some readers congratulated Dickens for keeping up with the human currents of his time, others accused him of forcing upon them a world with which, apart from an acknowledgment that it existed, they wanted nothing to do. Lady Carlyle, for example, said of Dickens' novel: "I know there are such unfortunate beings such as pick-pockets and street walkers...but I own I do not much wish to hear what they do to one another" (qtd. in Ford 41). Queen Victoria's Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, held similar views: "I don't like that low debasing view of mankind, I don't *like* those things; I wish to avoid them; I don't like them in *reality* and therefore I don't wish them represented" (qtd. in Patten 24). However, this was not the popular view. While some people were made perhaps a little uncomfortable by Dickens' depiction of the sordid

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<sup>3</sup>See George Harry Ford's *Dickens and His Readers; Aspects of Novel Criticism Since 1836* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1965).

world of St. Giles, they felt, similarly to John Forster, that “the absolute truth and precision [of the novel’s] delineation are not to be disputed... Indeed, we wish that all history were written in the spirit of *Oliver Twist*’s history” (379). If some of Dickens’ readers felt repulsed by the reality they met on the pages of this novel, others welcomed the glimpse of much of what composed their daily life – the hardship, the social disparities, the lack of means. His readership was composed both of commoners and of governing classes, fusing together the strata of different tastes. This was intentional on the writer’s part; for Dickens popularity meant that his novels gave pleasure to dons at Cambridge, to statesmen, to critics, as well as “to the lesser breeds of readers without the pale of educated tastes” (qtd. in Ford 22).

The feuilleton-roman would play an important role in his popularity. The serialization of his writings assured that people with lesser means would have equal access to his novels as well as those for whom money was not an issue.<sup>4</sup> Machado’s adoption of this medium for his translation of *Oliver Twist* would have a similar repercussion in Brazil. As far as I can ascertain, Machado’s is the first translation of Dickens into Portuguese. The fact that the novel was being published serially meant that many more people would have access to Dickens’ work. Though Dickens’ novels had been circulating in Brazil for some time (*Correio Mercantil*, for example, ran the following advertisement on November 30, 1856: “English books and novels last American edition, Dickens’ novels”<sup>5</sup>), the public’s access to such works would have

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<sup>4</sup>For more on Dickens and serialization, see David Payne’s *The Reenchantment of Nineteenth-century Fiction: Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Serialization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>5</sup>See Delso Renault’s *Rio de Janeiro: A vida da cidade refletida nos jornais (1850-1870)* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1978) for a detailed account of newspapers advertising in Rio de Janeiro in the later part of the nineteenth century. P.125.



been, at best, minimal, since the majority of the reading public did not possess a command of the English language. Dickens' success as a writer in Europe had ensured his fame in the tropics, and though his novels had been translated successfully into other languages, such as French and Italian,<sup>6</sup> they had not yet been translated into Portuguese. Furthermore, a large percentage of the reading public in Brazil, had they been able to read the novel in its original language, would not have had the means of acquiring these books. In mid-nineteenth century Brazil, the cost of publication was extremely high, and lending libraries were not yet very popular or numerous.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the feuilleton-roman served a double purpose in Brazil. Since its introduction in 1838, it provided the reading public with an affordable means of accessing works of literature that were also linguistically accessible. As in France, it also served to democratize the newspaper and to serve those who could not afford expensive subscriptions.<sup>8</sup> Machado embraced this new medium with much enthusiasm, seeing himself as one of its most fervent advocates. In a crônica of 1859 titled "O jornal e o livro," Machado argues for the importance of the newspaper and its overreaching importance in the cultural and political formation of a nation. For him, the newspaper is

a liberdade, é o povo, é a consciência, é a esperança, é a civilização... o jornal é uma expressão, é um sintoma de democracia; e a democracia é o povo. (III 948)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See Luisa Carrer's "Trieste's Early Role in the Italian Reception of Charles Dickens," *The Modern Language Review* 98.1 (2003): 1-10; Francesco M. Casotti's "Italian Translations of Dickens," *Dickensian* (1999):19-24; and Joseph T. Flibbert's "Dickens and the French Debate over Realism:1838-1856," *Comparative Literature* 23.1 (1971): 18-31.

<sup>7</sup>See Laurence Hallewell's *Books in Brazil: a History of the Publishing Trade* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982).

<sup>8</sup>For more on the history of serial publication in Brazil, see Marlyse Meyer's *Folhetim : Uma História* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996).

<sup>9</sup>All Portuguese references are to Machado de Assis' *Obra Completa*, organized by Afrânio Coutinho, Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Aguilar, 1962. The novels are collected in Volume I, while his crônicas and poetry

[freedom, it is the people, it is consciousness, it is hope, it is civilization... the newspaper is an expression, it is a symptom of democracy; and democracy is the people.]

This aspect of the daily press, more than any other, marked the newspaper as a more popular medium and therefore more modern.

O livro era um progresso; preenchia as condições do pensamento humano? Decerto; mas faltava ainda alguma coisa; não era ainda a tribuna comum, aberta à família universal, aparecendo sempre com o sol e sendo como ele o centro de um sistema planetário. A forma que correspondia a estas necessidades, a mesa popular para a distribuição do pão eucarístico da publicidade, é propriedade do espírito moderno: é o jornal. (III 945)

[The book was progress; did it fill the conditions of human thought? Certainly; but it still lacked something; it was not yet the common tribune, opened to the universal family, appearing always with the sun and being like it the center of a planetary system. The form that corresponded to these necessities, the popular table for the distribution of the Eucharistic bread of advertising, this is the property of the modern spirit: it is the newspaper.]

Furthermore, the newspaper becomes a more privileged space for

uma literatura quotidiana – reprodução diária do espírito do povo, o espelho comum de todos os fatos e todos os talentos, onde se reflete, não a idéia de um homem, mas a idéia popular. (III 948)

[an everyday literature – a daily reproduction of the spirit of the people, the common mirror for all facts and all talents, where it is reflected, not the idea of a single man, but the popular idea.]

Democracy, social change, and literature, become for Machado synonymous with the modernization of the newspapers and periodicals flooding Rio in the 50's and 60's. It was on the pages of one of these publications that Machado published his first poem shortly after moving to Rio in 1854; it was through the publication of poems, crônicas, and

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appear in Volume III. All Portuguese translations are performed by me, unless parenthetical citation is given.

theatrical reviews in feuilletons that Machado's name gradually became part of the intellectual life of Rio.

Thus, when he argues that the newspaper brings with it “o gérmen de uma revolução” (III 945) [the germ of a revolution], a revolution that according to him is the “reação do espírito humano sobre as fórmulas existentes do mundo literário” (III 945) [reaction of the human spirit to the existing formulas of the literary world] we can assume that his involvement with this revolution is twofold: he is at the same time the human spirit reacting to the works he reads, and a vessel for the popular voice in the works he creates. As in Dickens' life, the feuilleton played a critical role in Machado's life and career, providing him with a space where, as a literary man, he could gain recognition for his work. Much like Dickens, Machado would also publish many of his novels serially before publishing them in book format.

Curiously, Machado felt that the Brazilian feuilleton lacked a certain national quality, and urged fellow *folhetinistas* to seek a more Brazilian style. He critiques the Parisian influence taking hold of Brazilian writers and laments that

a cor nacional, em raríssimas exceções, tem tomado o folhetinista entre nós.” (III 960)

[the national color, only in rare exceptions, has taken up the folhetinista among us]

“O Folhetinista,” written in the later part of 1859, though mostly sarcastic in tone and condemning in attitude, delineates one of the big problems facing Machado and his contemporary writers. To be a *folhetinista* was to be up-to-date with world trends, cultural phenomena, political debates, and other worldly matters; the difficulty was in teasing out from the global influences that which was particularly Brazilian.

Escrever folhetim e ficar brasileiro é na verdade difícil...Entretanto, como todas as dificuldades se aplanam, elle podia bem tomar mais cor local, mais feição americana. Faria assim menos mal á independência do espírito nacional.... tão preso a essas imitações, a esses arremedos, a esse suicídio de originalidade e iniciativa. (III 960)

[To write folhetim and remain Brazilian is truly difficult... however, as all difficulties come to a level, he could try to take a more local color, a more American feature. He would thus interfere less with the spirit of national independency... so imprisoned to these imitations, these mimicries, this suicide of originality and initiative.]

It becomes clear throughout his writings that even as early as 1859, Machado had a strong sense of how essential it was for Brazil – and Brazilian writers – to establish an independent literary culture, which neither negated its influences nor mimicked them. Machado sought a balance between the foreign and the national, between the culture that was being imported and the one being developed in Brazil. These issues would influence much of his performance as a translator of Dickens.

Machado's self-proclaimed need for a more Brazilian feuilleton colored, to a certain degree, some of the changes he made to the text of *Oliver Twist*. The novel's serialization served not only to facilitate the public's access to this novel, but also as a public forum for Machado to exercise his ideas on foreign influence and Brazilian literature. Because he had often used his role as folhetinista to urge and warn his readers of the complex and important state of literary affairs in Brazil, it is not surprising that Machado extended these ideas into his translation of Dickens. The medium, which Machado believed to be the only medium of true democracy, would continue to carry *his own* ideas, even if embedded in the work of another. While on the one hand Machado used his crônicas to address directly issues of cultural independency, on the other he incorporated these same ideas into his translation of Dickens' novel. This manipulation,

or rewriting, of the original text is, because of its effectiveness, “all the more reason... to study it” (Lefevere 9).

However, though he is considered one of Brazil’s most important literary figures, and has been the subject of scholarship since the late nineteenth century, very little has been written about Machado’s performance as a translator. This impulse in Machadian studies reflects a more general tendency to place translation on the margins of scholarly and critical inquiry. Up until recently, Machadian scholars have considered his translations of poetry and prose only with regard to equivalence, i.e. how close or how distant from the original text Machado’s rendering is.<sup>10</sup> Understanding the process of translation as a mere substitution of textual material in one language for equivalent material in another language, critics have approached Machado’s translations as a linguistic exercise, where each item in the source language (SL) is paired – accurately or not – with a suitable equivalent in the target language (TL), thus ignoring cultural, textual and other situational and stylistic factors which play an essential role in translation.

Of course, the process of translating a text is multifaceted and requires a variety of ‘equivalences,’ carried out “unit by unit at the level of the phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph and the whole text” (Sager 148). Whether or not Machado thought about translation in these terms, the modern scholar should consider his translations both in their equivalence to the original text and as texts existing independently of the original. This holistic approach moves translation from a mere linguistic level and positions it at the center of a complex set of cultural, social, and linguistic norms.

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<sup>10</sup>See for example Jean-Michel Massa’s *Machado de Assis Traducteur* (Rennes: s.p., [1969?]) and John Gledson’s *Machado de Assis & Confrades de Versos* (São Paulo: Minden, 1998).

Often, the translation will vary in significant ways from the original text. Anton Popovič argues that these sometimes necessary deviations from the source text introduce shifts of expression in the translation, shifts which he redefines as not merely departures from grammatical or lexical correspondence but also as “all that appears as new with respect to the original, or fails to appear where it might have been expected” (79). Shifts, for him, represent the “relationship between the wording of the original work and that of the translation” (85), which include deviations originating from textual, literary, or cultural considerations. Thus, the procedures undertaken by a translator in order to “reproduce [the original text] as faithfully as possible and to grasp it in its totality, as an organic whole” (Popovič 80) are often influenced by both incircumventable linguistic differences and cultural norms.

While most approaches to translation insist on viewing the translated text as a reconstruction of its source, a target text-oriented approach allows the scholar to consider the translated text in its own light, on its own merits, and as the point of departure for analytical inquiries. In other words, by shifting our attention from issues of accuracy or equivalence, we may gain insight not only into the decision-making process of the translator but also come to some knowledge and understanding of the translational phenomena guiding the translator. In this manner, we are able to analyze the problems of equivalences and shifts of expression within the “constellation of the target culture itself” (Toury 75-76). Machado’s procedures as a translator become, in this kind of inquiry, informative of both himself as a writer in his own right and as a representative of his period.

Such work has already been undertaken by Sergio Luiz Prado Bellei and points the way to a more rigorous approach to the translations. Reading Machado's "O Corvo" not in regard to its faithfulness or equivalence to Edgar Allen Poe's original poem, Bellei raises the possibility that Machado performed his function as a translator 'badly' on purpose, 'mistranslating' the American poet for ideological reasons. For him, Machado's translation changes not only the stanza and line length of Poe's poem, but also its overall meaning. Machado performs these changes consciously, Bellei argues, because by altering the foreign text he is able to transpose it into what he calls an "alternative context." As a writer in a country fighting to establish a national literature and a sense of literary nationalism, Machado is aware that this

new beginning is doomed to arise in a problematic relationship of dependence on a previous origin represented by the western literary tradition.(12)

Because a western literary tradition is for the tropical writer at the same time a place of origin which cannot be denied and a place of opposition to a growing sense of Brazilian nationalism, Bellei sees Machado's role as writer as one of balance between two extremes, so that "neither the controlling power of origins nor the radical reversal of beginnings is allowed to dominate literary production" (11).

Such a balance may be achieved by means of the *appropriation* of the previous texts. By using appropriation as a basic strategy in writing, the writer in the new world succeeds in achieving both the repetition of origins and novelty, as he makes his own what is foreign and strange. (11)

As Bellei demonstrates, Machado's translation of "The Raven" represents a struggle on the part of the translator, a struggle with a set of literary traditions and values which are incongruous with the one developing in Brazil at the time. Bellei's exploration of Machado's procedures as a translator of Poe introduces to Machadian studies a

analytical discourse of translational phenomena that removes “O Corvo” from a context of simple equivalence to demonstrate how conscious Machado was of a need for a truly Brazilian voice in a truly Brazilian literature.

This type of analysis is essential to understanding the writer who has been often accused of betraying his Brazilian roots in favor of transnationalism. By both recognizing and refuting a western literary tradition, Machado’s translational procedures betray an internal dialogue hinted at in “O Passado, o presente e o futuro da literatura,” an essay published by Machado in *A Marmota* in 1858. In this essay, Machado confronts the problematic nature of asserting a unique national identity from under the heavy weight of European influence and voices the common preoccupation with creating a literature that both reflects both local color and aesthetic integrity. As we can see, this idea would permeate his procedures as Poe’s translator.

Following Bellei’s example, I intend to read Machado’s *Oliveira Twist* both in relation to the source text and as a text in its own right. In considering this translation, it is important to keep in mind that Machado’s translations of novels were limited to only two – Victor Hugo’s *Travailleurs de la mer* (1866) and *Oliver Twist*, while his translations of poems were numerous. However, because the translation of a longer piece of writing such as a novel (in contrast with the brief poems he translated) requires a different kind of relationship with the text than that of shorter pieces, we can assume that a close bond was formed between Machado and these texts. Since Machado, for at least two-and-a-half months, inhabited Dickens’ world, I will argue that Dickens’ text affected the young writer in important and fundamental ways. The impact of this experience is, in



turn, responsible for Machado's abandonment of the romantic poetry of his youth, and for his development as a fiction writer.

Furthermore, Machado's procedures in these early years as a translator of Dickens are instrumental in the formation of his political and social consciousness as a mature writer. By regarding *Oliveira Twist* as a text in its own right, and examining this idiosyncratic translation as one would any text authored by him, I will trace to these early years the genesis of a set of socio-political principles that undoubtedly guided the writings of his mature novels. I will also demonstrate that Machado's relationship with Dickens' text influenced, in direct and indirect ways, the tone of these same novels. Though he nowhere admits to it, Machado's close reading of the British Victorian left an indelible mark on the Brazilian Realist.

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## Chapter 1

Preceding Charles Dickens' death by only a few months, the first chapter of *Oliveira Twist* made its acquaintance with the Brazilian public on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1870. On the pages of *O Jornal da Tarde*, a periodical to which Machado contributed articles frequently, Machado introduced the world and misfortunes of Dickens' celebrated orphan. It was not, however, out of love and admiration that Machado translated *Oliver Twist*. Lacking both a permanent position and a fixed salary, Machado made his living entirely from his writings. His marriage to Carolina Augusta Xavier de Novais in November of 1869 added yet another layer to his already difficult financial situation. The translation of a serial novel provided him with the extra income he so much needed. Moreover, two months after he began publishing *Oliveira Twist*, a position as officer for the secretary of state presented itself. Machado immediately notified the editors of *Jornal* of his decision to stop the translation and accepted the official position.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Machado's biographers have documented his financial situation both in the months preceding the publication of *Oliveiro Twist* and in the months following it. When *Jornal da Tarde* announced the suspension of its services only a few weeks after his wedding, Machado's position became even more strained. In letters written at the time to friends such as Francisco Ramos Paz, Machado openly discusses how difficult things had been. For more information about Machado's financial situation see Galante de Sousa's *Bibliografia de Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: MEC, 1955), Daniel Piza's *Machado de Assis: Um Gênio Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 2005), and R. Magalhães Júnior's *Vida e obra de*

It would thus be easy to assume that Machado's involvement with Dickens' novel was merely a monetary transaction, where he converted Dickens' words into Brazilian currency. It has been easy for critics to dismiss this text as a means to an end.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, in a certain sense, it was, and there is much in the translation that confirms this. Machado's hastiness with much in the novel points to a financial enterprise, which turned lucrative only in so far as he worked fast and turned pages in to his editors quickly. It would be, however, shortsighted to attribute all the changes *Oliver Twist* underwent at the hands of Machado to some sort of carelessness.

Furthermore, since he indisputably had a better command of the French language than English (it being a point of some controversy among scholars whether Machado possessed *any* knowledge at all of English<sup>13</sup>) Machado based his translation on *Olivier*

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*Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1981). The letter to Paz is reprinted both in Piza (p.140) and in Magalhães Júnior (p.82), while the letter to the editors of *Jornal da Tarde* is reprinted in its entirety in Sousa, p.452.

<sup>12</sup>The translation of Dickens' novel is mentioned – if at all – by Machado's biographers frequently in connection to his financial situation during his debut as a novelist.

<sup>13</sup>There is a lot of disagreement when it comes to discerning how and when exactly Machado learned to speak and read in French. According to Gondim da Fonseca, Machado's future stepmother had asked the baker in their neighborhood to teach her son to read, write, and translate French. Critics have, however, disagreed upon this source. Jean-Michel Massa, for example, upon investigating the neighborhood where Assis lived as a child, came up empty for a Madame Gallot – the supposed owner of the bakery. Lucia Miguel Pereira, on the other hand, claims that upon befriending the French baker, Machado gained access into the Gallot family, where he claimed to have gone often, not only for the pleasure of their company, but for the opportunity to improve his knowledge of their language. Regardless of in whose house Machado learned the language, it is certain that he held some control over it by the age of twenty.

His knowledge of English is equally problematic. On the publication of "Minha Mãe," a poem written and published in 1855, critics questioned whether Machado had been influenced by William Cowper's "On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture," written in 1798. It is not likely that the young poet would have had enough knowledge of English to have read the poem in its original, but at the same time there are no records of any translations of Cowper's poems into French or Portuguese in the local newspapers or magazines. There is, however, the possibility that Machado was introduced to Cowper by Aluísio de Azevedo, who makes reference to Cowper in a few of his works. Regardless of whether this influence can or cannot be traced, Machado's knowledge of English is at best problematic. For more on Machado's language acquisition, see Jean-Michel Massa. *Dispersos de Machado de Assis*. (Rio de Janeiro: MEC 1965) and *Machado de Assis Traducteur* (Rennes: s.n., 1969), Lucia Miguel Pereira, *Machado de Assis* (Rio de Janeiro: s.n.,1955), and Godim da Fonseca, *Machado de Assis e o Hipopótamo* (São Paulo: s.n., 1961).

*Twist* (1864), a Dickens-authorized French translation by Alfred Gerardin. Because he translated from a translation, which already presented a few liberties vis-à-vis the original, Machado's linguistic distance from the original text is an important component in identifying his procedures as a translator. However, while this is a significant aspect, it should not serve as the guiding principle in approaching the text of *Oliveira Twist*. After all, as Annie Brisset argues, linguistic questions are only the "starting point for all thinking about translation" (343). Contrary to what Jean-Michel Massa would have us think, the correspondence between Machado's and Gerardin's text is *not* "totale, complete et absolue" (*Dispersos* 530n).<sup>14</sup> Machado's translation varies in significant ways from Gerardin's, and the changes he makes occupy, I will argue, not a linguistic sphere but a socio-political one.

Machado's procedures as a translator of Dickens vary somewhat from those of the poets and playwrights he translated, both before and after 1870. While Machado's translation of poems are infused with appropriations which stem from a sense of nationality, as Bellei argues is the case with Machado's translation of Poe's "The Raven," his approach to Dickens' novel is marked by a taxonomy which reveals three different and seemingly unrelated groups: oversights, domestication, and patronage. These groups are not, however, so easy to discern. As Antoine Berman argues, while

the deformation of translations are more expected in prose... they operate on points that do not immediately reveal themselves. It is easy to detect how a poem by Hölderlin has been massacred... It isn't so easy to see what was done to a novel... especially if the translation is 'good.' (287)

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<sup>14</sup>For a comparison between Gerardin's and Machado's translations, see Massa's *Dispersos*.

Though Machado's translation of *Oliver Twist* cannot, in any modern sense, be considered 'good,' most of his changes to the original text – apart from oversights – are difficult to single out, and do not impair our reading of the novel in general.

Oversights, though a prevalent aspect of the translation, provide only a confirmation of the for-hire nature of *Oliveira Twist*. These are errors or omissions which derive neither from socio-political, ideological, or linguistic considerations. As such, they must be considered as playing a minor part in understanding Machado the translator, however scandalous we might find his omissions and errors. Any reader familiar with Dickens would have found the text of *Jornal da Tarde* to be both flat and witless. Mimicking Dickens' compositional routine,<sup>15</sup> Machado probably translated a chapter a day, every day, and upon completion of each chapter, turned it over to the press, making revision impossible. Such hastiness would explain the numerous errors found in the translation. For example, in chapter 23, when Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney talk by the fireplace, a certain Mrs. Barney is introduced into the living room and described as standing near the fireplace and smiling in expectation of her tea. However, the living room is occupied clearly only by Mrs. Corney and Mr. Bumble. Though there is no mention of Mrs. Barney anywhere else in Machado's text and nowhere in Dickens' original, this brief introduction must have intrigued the readers of *Oliveira Twist* and forced upon them a connection between *this* Mrs. Barney and Barney, another source of

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<sup>15</sup> According to his biographers, Dickens wrote much of *Oliver Twist* while complying with other publishing contracts, and turning in his chapters to the publisher as soon as they were written. Grahame Smith, for example, writes that Dickens "wrote serially for serial publication... usually as a result of two weeks' writing a month, and then published in this form with a minimum of revision" (21). For more on how Dickens' novels were composed, see Grahame Smith's *Charles Dickens: a Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin P, 1996), Fred Kaplan's *Dickens: a Biography* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1998), and Herbert Foltinek's *Imagination All Compact : How Did Charles Dickens Compose His Novels?* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005).

malevolence in the novel, first introduced in chapter 15. Perhaps nothing represents this inattentiveness on Machado's part better than the fact that *Oliveira Twist*'s readers never experienced Chapter 8, an important transitional chapter in the novel, where Oliver is first introduced to the people who would play an important role in his life and be mostly responsible for his misfortunes. In this chapter, Oliver, who had previously decided to run away from Mr. Sowerberry and try his luck in London, meets Jack Dawkins on the way, who through misconstrued (on his part) and somewhat misconceived (on Oliver's part) promises, leads Oliver straight into the hands of Fagin. The readers following Oliveira's adventures must have puzzled over how, exactly, he went from saying goodbye to Dick one day to being in a dark and moldy room with Fagin in London the next day.

However, of more interest to this inquiry are the modifications which defy classification as oversights. Because the act of translation has always involved a certain degree of domestication, many of Machado's modifications can thus be easily classified as such. Lawrence Venuti sees domestication as a way of making a translated text transparent, fluent, recognizable, and familiar. This 'invisibility' on the part of the translator ensures that the foreign culture is brought closer to the reader in the target culture, minimizing the foreignness of the original text.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for example, Machado's readers miss out on the "genuine motherwit and unadulterated vernacular idioms of the lower classes in London" which had consecrated Dickens (Ford 16). The lack of Cockney speech rhythms, which had made Dickens' early novels so appealing to the public, creates in *Oliveira Twist* a different social context in which the poor orphan circulates. Because he does not differentiate among accents, in Machado's text all characters speak

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<sup>16</sup>See Lawrence Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1998) for a full discussion of domestication vs. foreignization.

with the same inflections, and though they belong to different classes, at least in the Brazilian text they are not linguistically stratified. Machado's natural sounding Portuguese that fits well within dominant discourse types, his removal of source language realia (i.e. Cockney language pattern), his interpolations and exegeses all contribute to the invisibility of the translation.

However, this need to turn the foreign into something less strange and provide the readers with "the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other" (Venuti 15) becomes for Machado an aesthetic struggle. Naturally opposed to the overwhelming popular view which recognized national qualities only in works which dealt exclusively with local topics, Machado sought a Brazilianess that was, as he argues in "Instinto de Nacionalidade," interior. For Machado, though an emerging literature should feed itself on local themes, the public should not restrict it to only those subjects. For him, an authentic Brazilian writer must possess,

antes de tudo... certo sentimento íntimo, que o torne homem do seu tempo e do seu país, ainda quando trate de assuntos remotos no tempo e no espaço" (804)

[before anything... a certain intimate feeling, which turns him into a man of his time and of his country, even when dealing with remote subjects in time and space].

Roberto Schwartz sees much of Machado's writings as representative of this tension. While Machado was an advocate for the creation of a uniquely Brazilian literary aesthetic, he constantly engaged with European models. Schwartz argues that, in post-independence Brazil, while some insisted on the originality of Brazilian letters, others insisted on their western character. Machado's writings portray Brazilianess precisely in mimicking the national process by which local conditions and foreign customs are

constantly battling for supremacy (168-72).<sup>17</sup> Machado's formative years as a writer took place amid a debate for a national literary identity, independent, much like the new republic itself, from foreign dominance. Because, as Venuti argues, translated texts can be an influential source in the construction of national identities (67), Machado's procedures vis-à-vis Dickens' text reflect the genesis of a political stance that insists on neutrality and bipartisanship, which would reach full maturity in his later novels.

Having partially changed the name of the novel's protagonist, as well as its author (Oliver is now Oliveira, Charles is Carlos), Machado needs to situate his readers not in the tropical streets of Rio de Janeiro – where most likely a *Carlos* Dickens might place his *Oliveira* Twist – but in the dark and somber world of St. Giles. Thus he must add to the opening lines of the novel information which would have been obvious to any of Dickens' English readers.

Among other public buildings in a certain town... (17)

Dentro de vários monumentos públicos que enobrecem uma cidade de  
*Inglaterra...*(264)<sup>18</sup> (my emphasis)  
[Among the various public buildings that ennoble a city in *England...*]

Dickens' text, however, does not need to mention London specifically, since, part of his reputation as a writer, as discussed above, arose from his meticulous description of his surroundings.

Machado's need to position his reader in a different cultural context, thus seemingly foreignizing the translation, is nullified by his overt domestication of the text

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<sup>17</sup>See Roberto Schwartz's "Duas Notas Sobre Machado de Assis," *Que Horas São?* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987). Schwartz is committed to the view that Machado as a writer was deeply engaged in forming a national, distinct, Brazilian literary aesthetic. Many critics have argued against this view. Sylvio Romero, for example, claimed that Machado was responsible for delaying its development. These two opposing views have dominated Machadian scholarship.

<sup>18</sup>The text of *Oliveira Twist* I will be quoting from is reprinted in Jean-Michel Massa's *Dispersos*.



in its title and author's name. These contradictory impulses play a decisive role in his performance as a translator: he oscillates between alerting the reader to her foreign terrain and ambiguously positioning her in national territory. In chapter II, for example, when Dickens makes a sarcastic comment about the state of affairs in his country,

What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England! (25)

Machado simply translates it as

prova evidente da brandura das leis do *nosso venturoso país...*” (33) (my emphasis)  
[evident proof of the mildness of the laws of *our prosperous country...*]

We might not notice the possessive pronoun - after all, we are not after equivalence - had Machado not made numerous domesticating choices leading up to this point. Mrs. Mann, for example, offers Mr. Bumble “uma pingazinha,” a typical Brazilian spirit made out of sugar cane, instead of the English gin; the parish pays the same Mrs. Mann to care for orphans like Oliver “três tostões,” the currency circulating in Brazil at the time, instead of the British “sevenpence-halfpenny”. Thus, when the reader encounters the possessive pronoun qualifying *país*, she may very well have understood that country to be no other than Brazil.

Though Dickens refrains from opening his novel with a social commentary, much of the first chapter both denounces and criticizes the New Poor Law (1834). Machado's addition of the verb ‘to ennoble’ to the opening line of the novel (“Dentro de vários monumentos públicos que *enobrecem* uma cidade de Inglaterra...” ) (my emphasis) where it functions as a qualifier for the noun ‘workhouse,’ points to Machado's use of a Dickensian sense of irony, which, in the Brazilian text, serves two different purposes. Coming into existence with the New Poor Law, workhouses served as temporary

residence for the poor. Built both in order to prevent charity to the poor in their own homes and to move away from the parishes and into the hands of a central authority the treatment of destitute persons, workhouses were places of extreme rigidity and hardship. The report of 1834 lays down different policies which make it the government's responsibility to care for the poor and its prerogative to create in these new quarters a less than desirable living space. For fear that the poor would do little to change their dependent position, a workhouse should be, in the words of Reverend H.H. Milman, "a place of hardship, of coarse fare, of degradation and humility; it should be administrated with strictness – with severity; it should be as repulsive as is consistent with humanity" (qtd. in Anstuthur 35). Dickens criticizes this new concept openly, in typical Dickensian style, by sarcastically describing the inhumane conditions of these establishments and the absurdity behind their rationale. Of the new reform he writes:

It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper all the year round; a brick and mortar elysium, where it was all play and no work. "Oho!" said the board, looking very knowing; "we are the fellows to set this to rights; we'll stop it all, in no time." So, they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view, they contracted with the water-works to lay on an unlimited supply of water; and with a corn-factor to supply periodically small quantities of oatmeal; and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays. (25-26)

Machado's choice of word functions in seconding Dickens criticism. Just as the board members "were very sage, deep, philosophical men" (25), the workhouse becomes in Machado's text also a noble building and is granted a place among all the other worth mentioning buildings in London. Machado incorporates Dickens' sense of irony and humor seamlessly, producing in the text the organic feel of the original.

However, at the same time, Machado is able to introduce a criticism of his own. Against concrete evidence, Brazilians in general were conditioned to consider all that existed outside of Brazil as superior. Thus, the workhouse, in all its hardship and despicable conditions, can be seen because of its 'Europeanness' as a 'noble' building. Once a colony of Portugal, and though independent since 1822, Brazil's veneration of everything European served only to emphasize the country's history as colonized. By constantly elevating Portugal and the whole of Europe to a characteristically superior and civilized position, by sheer contrast, everything Brazilian becomes in turn degenerate and uncivilized. Edward Said corroborates this position by arguing that the production of the stereotypical image of the colonized presupposes always the superior position of the European in any type of relation with the colonized. Since the colonization of Brazil, and the move of the Portuguese Royal family to the tropics, much of Brazilian socio-political structures were founded based on European models, and Brazilians, in general, looked up to Europe for guidance on how to behave, dress, think, and act. The struggle to emerge from under the power of Europe had already been occupying the mind of many of Machado's contemporaries, including Machado himself, as becomes clear through his *crônicas*.

As a translator, Machado adds to the novel's social critique a different perspective, the perspective of the outsider. Infusing his translation with a subtle critique of both the national mentality vis-à-vis foreign influence and the current state of affairs in his own country, his own *virtuoso país*, Machado's juxtaposition of the novel's setting – established from the beginning as foreign – along with frequent anchoring to Brazilian

soil and culture allows him to appropriate Dickens' social criticism to criticize, in turn, Brazil's tendency to venerate European trends.<sup>19</sup>

Dickens' denunciation of the inhumane treatment of the poor and destitute becomes for Machado an opportunity to ridicule Brazil's insistence on holding up European countries as models of modernity and civilization. For example, Mr. Sowerberry is transformed, in Machado's text, into an "empresário de enterros" instead of a simple undertaker. Though the construction is foremost humorous, I would argue that behind it lies a strong critique that functions on two levels. On the one hand it overstates the capitalistic force behind European cultures - the term 'undertaker' is devoid of economical connotation, while *entrepreneur* emphasizes this very aspect. At the same time, however, and by the same token, Machado ridicules Brazil's insistence in attributing a superior value to everything foreign. Because being an entrepreneur holds much more importance in title and social perception, transforming Mr. Sowerberry into one sarcastically elevates his status and profession - though without changing anything about him - in Machado's text.

At the same time, Machado is able to critique, by the act of domestication, the incongruous adoption of liberal notions. Though post-colonial Brazil mirrored many of its laws and much of its cultural life after liberal European and American models, liberalism remained for much of the nineteenth century an idea that could not be achieved in its full sense because it contrasted directly with many social and economic features of

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<sup>19</sup>It is curious to note that in this sense, Machado's translation of Dickens' novel demonstrates already the seeds of what Schwartz identified as misplaced ideas (*idéias fora do lugar*) in Machado's mature novels. See Schwartz's "As *Idéias fora do lugar*" [The ideas out of place] in *Ao Vencedor as Batatas* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1977). See also Schwartz's *Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo: Machado de Assis* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1990) for a discussion of this tension in Machado's early novels. *Ressurreição*, however, is mentioned briefly, while the other four novels of Machado's first period are discussed in detail.

the colonial period, especially that of slavery. Though Brazil had arrived at a somewhat stable political place after the numerous separatist movements of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, such as the Confederation of the Equator in the northeast and the Farroupilha Revolution in the south, the continued presence of slavery remained a particular problem which continuously exposed the inequalities in Brazilian society. Furthermore, though the official model for the construction of the Brazilian national symbolic system had been defined by the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute as the offspring of the unique synthesis and harmonious integration of three races – European whites, African blacks, and native Indians - the process of *branquiamento* was immediately established among the Brazilian elite.<sup>20</sup>

Schwartz argues that because Brazil imported liberal notion while insisting on the economic importance of slavery and on the inferiority of the Afro-Brazilian race, the combination of these two modes of thinking – liberalism and capitalism, and slavery and inequality – created in the tropics a new context. “Entre nós,” Schwartz argues, “as mesmas idéias seriam falsas num sentido diverso, por assim dizer, original” (Idéias 14) [Among us, these same ideas would be false in a different sense, in other words, original]. These misappropriated ideas would be, he argues, prime material and, at the same time, a problem for literature.

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<sup>20</sup>Carl Friedrich Phillip von Martius was the first to underscore the importance of the three races as a historical factor in the formation of a Brazilian nationality. See “Como se deve escrever a História do Brasil,” *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* January 6, 1845 (24): 389-411. Reprinted in *Cadernos do Centro de Pesquisa Literárias da PUC-RS* 1:2 (1995): 83-94. The policy of ‘whitening’ encompassed Martius’ notion that whites were to constitute the dominant factor in Brazilian nationality: “O sangue português... deverá absorver os pequenos confluente das raças India e etiópica” (84) [Portuguese blood... will absorb the small confluents of the Indian and Ethiopian races] (my translation). For an extensive discussion of Brazilian racial ideology, see Thomas E. Skidmore’s *Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993).

As he domesticates Dickens, Machado enforces upon the text a certain cultural dominance that is at once representative of himself as a writer trying to establish a national literary identity and of his culture at large. His need to expose, ridicule, but at the same time protect in a certain way that which is foreign is transparently dominant in this translation. When Oliver rebels against Noah's insults, for example, and ends up locked in a dark room, Mr. Bumble explains to all in the room that such rage was a direct consequence of eating meat.

"It's not Madness, ma'am," replied Mr. Bumble, after a few moments of deep meditation. "It's Meat."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Sowerberry.

"Meat, ma'am, meat," replied Bumble, with stern emphasis. "You've over-fed him, ma'am. You've raised an artificial soul and spirit in him, ma'am, unbecoming a person of his condition: as the board, Mrs. Sowerberry, who are practical philosophers, will tell you. What have paupers to do with soul or spirit? It's quite enough that we let 'em have live bodies. If you had kept the boy on gruel, ma'am, this would never have happened." (56)

Interestingly, Mrs. Sowerberry, a cruel and heartless woman, responds by exclaiming: "this comes of being liberal!" (56) Though Dickens is quick to ridicule Mrs. Sowerberry 'liberality,' stressing the meagerness of her actions towards Oliver, Machado does away completely both with the word liberal and its exposition. Instead, Mrs. Sowerberry exclaims in Portuguese: "aqui está o que é ser generosa!" (296)

Because Liberalism remained a 'misplaced idea' for all of the nineteenth century and a good part of the twentieth, Machado's translation is replete with modifications that directly confront this issue. Mrs. Sowerberry's generosity, though Machado's choice of adjective is used precisely with the same degree of sarcasm as Dickens' noun, it is not to be confused with liberal issues. Since the revolutions of the eighteenth century, much of Europe insisted, however frequently their laws would infringe on this very ideal, on the

individuality of men and their right to freedom. Because this notion is an integral part of society, Dickens can criticize people's abhorrent misappropriation of the term. Mrs. Sowerberry's liberality, he tell us, "had consisted in a profuse bestowal upon him of all the dirty odds and ends which nobody else would eat", and of Mr. Bumble's accusation, "she was wholly innocent, in thought, word, or deed" (56-57).

Machado, on the other hand, cannot openly denounce the misappropriations of an ideal which had yet to take root in his country. Because literature functions as a system, as André Lefevere argues, a system that constitutes "the complex 'system of systems' that is culture," it both impacts and influences the social system to which it belongs. Translators, he suggests,

have to be traitors, but most of the time they don't know it, and nearly all of the time they have no choice, not as long as they remain within the boundaries of the culture that is theirs by birth or adoption. (13)

Machado, as a translator, is bound by this very system, which acts, Lefevere argues, as a series of constraints. Because of this, Machado represses certain aspects of Dickens' novel which are opposed to the dominant concept of what "literature should (be allowed to) be – its poetics... and of what society should (be allowed to) be – ideology" (Lefevere 14).

As such, a different type of cultural dominance interferes with Machado's translation of *Oliver Twist*. Whether because it was discomfiting for the reader, if not, for sure, for the translator, Machado does away with key passages of Dickens' novel regarding human bondage. These omissions, in turn, resemble more modern issues of patronage.<sup>21</sup> Lefevere proposes that patronage, "something like the powers (persons,

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<sup>21</sup>For a discussion of patronage, see André Lefevere's *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992). See also Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an*

institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature” (15), can take the form of individuals, political or religious institutions, social classes, media, or publishers, and, in each case, can exert influence so that “the literary system does not fall too far out of step with the other subsystems society consists of” (14). Patronage, or the patron, can exert ideological constraints over subject and form, economic provision for writers, translators, among others.

As a mulatto in a slavocratic society, Machado, as well as some critics, understood that his position as an intellectual voice in nineteenth century Brazil was precarious. His status as a mulatto would occupy the mind of many contemporary critics. For example, José Veríssimo wrote of Machado upon his death: “Mulato, foi de fato um grego da melhor época” (164) [Mulato, he was in fact a greek from the best epoch]. Veríssimo’s commentary caused much turmoil among Machado’s friends, such as Joaquim Nabuco, who wrote in response:

[e]u não o teria chamado mulato e penso que nada lhe doeria mais do que essa síntese... a palavra não é literária e é pejorativa. O Machado para mim era *branco*, e creio que por tal se tomava. (164)

[I would not have called him a mulato and think that nothing would hurt him as this synthesis... the word is not literary and is pejorative. Machado was for me *white*, and I believe he considered himself as such] (my emphasis)

Machado, as well as his friends, felt the constant need to whiten himself, and let the drop of Negro blood be lost in his Azorean maternal background. While in countries like the United States, one drop of Negro blood was more than enough to turn that person

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*Ethics of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Venuti argues that whenever translations are governed by the state or similar institutions, the translated texts hold the potential to affect the target culture by portraying a sense of what is good, true, and possible.



‘black,’<sup>22</sup> in Brazil the formula was reversed: one needs only one drop of Caucasian blood to turn ‘white.’ Thus, Machado could consider himself, and in turn be considered by his friends, white. Machado’s features, as he matured, both reflected and belied his African ancestry. His *branquiamento*, as it were, over the years, was marked not only by his adoption of a beard and a pince-nez (both artifacts which helped refine his nose and lips) but also by his social rising.

As the grandson of a freed slave, Machado lived forty-nine of his sixty-nine years in a slavocratic society, though he maintained a famously elusive position vis-à-vis slavery and abolitionist movements. None of his novels would deal directly – or indirectly – with this problem. This political neutrality Machado would also impose on Dickens’ novel. By either shortening or completely omitting delicate passages dealing with Oliver’s indenture, and all negotiations deriving therefrom, Machado somehow softens the terrible reality of lives which are not controlled by the individual but by a centralized power. For example, when Mr. Gamfield is asked to make a case for Oliver’s apprenticeship as a chimney sweeper, Machado omits or shortens much of the dialogue between the council, Mr. Gamfield, and Mr. Bumble. Machado reduces Dickens’ text to a few lines, and removes all but the final words about Oliver’s ‘price:’

Mr. Gamfield having lingered behind to give the donkey another blow on the head, and another wrench of the jaw, as a caution not to run away in his absence, followed the gentleman with the white waistcoat into the room where Oliver had first seen him.  
"It's a nasty trade," said Mr. Limbkins, when Gamfield had again stated his wish.

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<sup>22</sup>Perhaps this accounts for Harold Bloom’s characterization of Machado as the “supreme *black* literary artist to date” (674) (my emphasis). See *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002). Bloom prefaces all references to Machado with the adjective ‘African-Brazilian,’ and writes: “I had read and fallen in love with his work... before I learned that Machado was a mulatto, and the grandson of slaves...Reading Machado de Assis, I first assumed that he was what we call ‘white’” (675).

"Young boys have been smothered in chimneys before now," said another gentleman.

"That's acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down agin," said Gamfield; "that's all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke ain't o' no use at all in making a boy come down, for it only sinds him to sleep, and that's wot he likes. Boys is very obstinit, and wery lazy, gen'lmen, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down vith a run. It's humane too, gen'lmen, acause, even if they've stuck in the chimbley, roasting their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate themselves." (31)

Instead of relating Mr. Gamfield's argument, Machado merely told his readers:

Quando o Sr. Gamfield expôs ao conselho o que queria, disse o Sr. Limbkins, presidente:

"O ofício de limpador de chaminé é bem porco."

"Tem-se visto morrerem as crianças nas chaminés," disse outro sujeito. (276)

[When Mr. Gamfield explained to the council what he wanted, Mr. Limbkins, the president, said:

"The craft of a chimney sweeper is very dirty."

"Children have been seen to die in the chimneys," said another citizen.]

Once the council decides against Mr. Gamfield, it being understood that some boys had died under his care, a long series of bargaining begins.

"What'll you give, gen'lmen? Come! Don't be too hard on a poor man. What'll you give?"

"I should say, three pound ten was plenty," said Mr. Limbkins.

"Ten shillings too much," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

"Come!" said Gamfield; "say four pound, gen'lmen. Say four pound, and you've got rid on him for good and all. There!"

"Three pound ten," repeated Mr. Limbkins, firmly.

"Come! I'll split the difference, gen'lmen," urged Gamfield. "Three pound fifteen."

"Not a farthing more," was the firm reply of Mr. Limbkins.

"You're desperate hard upon me, gen'lmen," said Gamfield, wavering.

"Pooh! pooh! nonsense!" said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. "He'd be cheap with nothing at all, as a premium. Take him, you silly fellow! He's just the boy for you. He wants the stick, now and then: it'll do him good; and his board needn't come very expensive, for he hasn't been overfed since he was born. Ha! ha! ha!" (32)

Machado communicates only the resolution of the bargaining, writing

Depois de alguma discussão ficou assentado que só se dariam três libras e dez shillings. (277)

[After some discussion it was agreed that only three pounds and ten shillings would be given.]

In a sense, Machado's translation yields both to himself as patron and to the patronage of the still dominant institution of slavery. Patrons, Lefevere argues, attempt to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems, which, together, make up a society, a culture (15). On the personal level, Machado's procedures reveal a discomfort in expressing, even if on behalf of another writer, a critique of the process through which any type of bondage is imposed on human beings. Throughout his career, this position – which neither negated nor exposed slavery and its cruelty – permeated his novels and short stories. Both in his private life and in his writings, Machado refrained from participating in any of the abolition movements that were taking hold of Rio de Janeiro from the early 1850's on, though many of his personal friends played key roles in bringing about the Lei Áurea on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1888.

On a cultural level, Machado's refusal to translate these passages of Dickens' novel reveals the force of an undifferentiated patronage and the perils it poses for a starting writer. While some writers choose to oppose them – as is the case with Aluísio de Azevedo's *O Mulato* (1880), a novel that had an immense social impact in slavocratic Brazil, and though sensitive in subject matter, quickly became a bestseller, - others, perhaps out of involuntary reluctance, adapt to them.

The text of *Oliveira Twist*, long rejected by critics as a less than fertile ground for scholarly enquiry, reveals a set of guiding principles in Machado's procedures. These procedures, in turn, reveal a system of cultural norms internalized by him and expressed in different ways in this translation. As such, it becomes somewhat easier to link

Machado as a young novelist to the genius of his mature years.<sup>23</sup> This translation demonstrates, in both skill and consciousness, that Machado's engagement with social and literary issues was deep and that he was extremely committed to the formation of a uniquely Brazilian literary aesthetic. These ideas would dominate his mature novels. Yet, discovering their genesis so early in Machado's career begs that we also revisit the early, and often dismissed, novels of his "romantic" period. However, as Machado says of Oliver's story, "caminhemos devagar."

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<sup>23</sup>Schwartz has suggested that "the discontinuity between the *Posthumous Memoirs* and the somewhat colorless fiction of Machado's first phase is undeniable, unless we wish to ignore the facts of quality, which are after all the very reason for the existence of literary criticism" (*Master* 149)

## Chapter 2

Critics have long contended with the disparity between the novels of Machado's early romantic period and those of his maturity for which he is most celebrated. Long overlooked, however, is the key place occupied by the translation of Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, which, as I have been arguing, plays a crucial part in any evaluation of his development as novelist. Positioned, as it is, just prior to the appearance of his first novel, *Ressurreição*, *Oliveira Twist* can be seen as informing his practices not only in what might be called his novelistic apprenticeship but, as well, as instrumental in the development of thematic concerns which would occupy him throughout his entire career as novelist. In short, what Machado learned in his conversation with the English romancer provides the bridge that will enable a more nuanced view of the shift from those works generally regarded as negligible attempts of still-developing novelist to the more searching and fully realized works of his later years.

Though, from the standpoint of plot and dramatic particulars, we would be hard pressed to find similarities between *Oliver Twist* and Machado's *Ressurreição*, the presence of Dickensian motifs in Machado's first novel is unmistakable. Indeed, as I shall demonstrate, such a presence can be discerned throughout his major work. The present

study will address two interrelated themes: the elusive female character and the problem of dissimulation. Much scholarship has been devoted over the past fifty years or so to the feminine, the female and feminism in Machado's novels, most of which addressing indirectly or directly issues of deceit. Machado's encounter with Dickens provided him with a model for characters of his own who would, much like Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, keep fellow characters and readers alike at bay regarding their 'real' intentions. In *Ressurreição*, Machado begins experimenting with this notion, developing, in the figure of Lívia, what would later become one of his trademarks, *mulheres dissimuladas*.

While Dickens is not often cited as a literary influence on Machado, a few critics have pointed out similarities between their works. Ricardo Lísias, for example, in the Introduction to *Oliver Twist*, argues for a Dickensian influence on Machado's second novel, *A mão e a luva* (1874). For him, Machado conflates in the figure of Guiomar, who is both an orphan and constricted by social norms, the plights of Oliver and Rose.

[t]anto no folhetim de Dickens quando no de Machado, não é apenas a estrutura familiar que coincide: as duas moças vêm-se na obrigação de confrontar, o que fazer de maneira distintas, a rígida estrutura social com a manutenção de seus sentimentos ou interesses. (15)

[in Dickens' novel as well as Machado's it is not only the familiar structure that coincides: the two young women see themselves forced to confront, which they do in distinct ways, the rigid social structure with the maintenance of their feelings or interests].

On the other hand, Eugenio Gomes, in his discussion of English influences on Machado, discusses Dickens last, in a brief chapter that mostly draws parallels between some characters in *David Copperfield* and *Dom Casmurro*. Gomes sees many similarities between these two novels in terms of plot, uses of metaphors, characters, and narrative structure. Like David, Bentinho narrates his own life story, loses his father early in life,

becomes a lawyer, and is betrayed by his best friend. Furthermore, Gomes sees Escobar's affair with Capitú as a reflection of James Steerforth's affair with Little Em'ly. Capitú, too, like Little Em'ly, has close marine ties, and her famous "olhos de ressaca" recalls for the critic Em'ly's look "directed far out to sea." The fact that both Steerforth and Escobar are drowned by the end of the novels emphasizes his conviction. Gomes argues that in *Dom Casmurro* Dickens' influence on Machado is more transparent than in any other of Machado's novels, and that Machado's adoption of both Dickensian characters and characterization is revealed through many different aspects of this novel.

It may seem counterproductive to argue against a Dickensian influence in a thesis that sets out to establish it. However, there are basically two problems with Lísias' and Gomes' reading, and they both stem from a mischaracterization of Dickens. First of all, there are no similarities between the characters of *Oliver Twist* and *A mão e a luva*. Guiomar is an ambitious and intelligent woman who, after losing her parents, plots her social ascension and access to power, does not resemble in the least naïve and gullible Oliver. That she does so seemingly without disturbing social codes for female behavior fits perfectly within the boundaries both of Brazilian romanticism and the expectations of Machado's predominantly female readers. Rose, on the other hand, unlike Guiomar, is the Victorian picture of virtue, the true angel in the house. Her willingness to forgo her love for Harry, since such matrimony seems to be detrimental to his social position, is not mirrored in Guiomar at all. Her marriage to Luiz Alves at the end of the novel is a calculated and manipulative move, and it is highly probable that she has no feelings for him whatsoever.

Secondly, Gomes' assertions that in Dickens' novels "difícilmente se encontra o meio termo: ou pintava um anjo ou um monstro, e anjo e monstro do princípio ao fim" (100) [one hardly finds happy medium: he either painted an angel or a monster, angel and monster from beginning to end], derives from a strain in Dickensian studies that insists in viewing his characters as 'flat' and devoid of psychological depth. In these terms, both James Steerforth and Little Em'ly, and in turn, Escobar and Capitú, are static and paralyzed in a state of malevolence for the entirety of both novels. In order to sustain such a reading one must do away with the complexity of Dickens' novel and with the ambiguity on which Machado's novel is predicated - and one of the greatest aspects of Machado's novel is its perpetual refusal to provide a definitive answer regarding Bentinho's suspicion. We *don't* know and will never be certain whether Ezequiel's eyes indeed recall those of Escobar or whether Bentinho has imagined it all.

For all this, Dickens is much more influential in Machado's opus than either critic suggests. Because Machado adamantly insists, as mentioned above, on the formation of a spirit of national literary independence, his approach to the Dickensian text is guided by reluctant submission, that is, his procedures as a translator of Dickens are those which Robert Wechsler defines as the procedures of a "young translator." Wechsler claims that when a translator of fiction – the translation of poetry, for him, is always guided by love and admiration, whereas that of fiction, as is the case with Machado, is guided by financial terms – is either young or not successful as a novelist, the translated text is more often than not infused with the translator's idiosyncrasies and voice. That is, when a translation is *not* performed by an artistic equal, the translator's impulse will be to 'write' himself into the already established text. This impulse arises from the difficulty the young



translator faces when he has to submit to another's text. To be a translator, Wechsler writes

is to suppress your own voice in favor of another's, to spend your time worrying over the other's problems, manipulating the other's images and characters, expressing the other's visions and ideas. It is to become nothing but a spokesperson for this other writer, when you could otherwise be creating your own fiction and poetry, expressing your own self. (32)

This tension is central to Machado's translation. However, Wechsler argues, there is much to be gained from this type of subordination. Wechsler sees in this difficult process a system of rewards which benefit the translator in fundamental ways. For example, by focusing on the form employed by the writer of the source text, the young translator is able to step away from issues of expression; he is also able to write about things of which he has no knowledge and has yet to experience. In this sense, when Machado began translating *Oliver Twist*, Dickens provided him with the gift of his craft to learn from and a whole new set of experiences to give utterance to without having ever lived them. In other words, Wechsler sees the act of submission involving not only "locking yourself into another writer's mind and style and vision, but also unlocking things in oneself" (49). The young translator thus develops an intimate relationship with the source writer which makes the translator's submission a positive one. The more disparate the relationship between writer and translator is, Wechsler argues, the more the translator has to gain, for the differences will lead to new ways of seeing the world and to new ways of expressing what one sees.

It would be hard to imagine a more disparate relationship than that of the young Machado de Assis and Charles Dickens. The world described by Dickens in *Oliver Twist* had little in common with the world depicted up to this point by Machado in his poems,

short stories, and plays. Yet, as Machado yields to Dickens' craft, he internalizes, most importantly, some of the devices Dickens uses in creating the character of Nancy. Her ability to dissimulate serves as prototype for many of Machado's female characters, and throughout his life as a novelist, Nancy's type populates – to a greater or lesser degree – every one of his novels.

*Ressurreição*, in which this prototype first makes her appearance, is a dangerous novel for critics, as John Gledson has suggested. Machado himself regarded it as the work of an amateur is trying out his pen in a new genre. He wanted to write, he adds, not a social, but a psychological sketch, “o esboço de uma situação e o contraste de dois caracteres” (I 32) [the sketch of a situation and the contrast between two characters]. These two characters, idealistic and romantic Livia and jealous and callous Félix, and their situation – a passionate love affair – result in despair, since no amount of persuading can dispel Félix's jealousy and mistrust. The danger this novel poses is two-fold: on the one hand, critics insist on dismissing it as the least important of novels from Machado's first period,<sup>24</sup> while on the other hand, according to Gledson, critics read this novel only as confirmation of their reading of *Don Casmurro*, written thirty years later. Because Machado raises the issues of jealousy in both novels, critics have tended to read *Ressurreição* as evidence of Capitú's guilt or innocence in *Don Casmurro* (Deceptive 84).

However, the similarities between *Ressurreição* and *Don Casmurro* are hard to ignore. Both novels deal with issues of jealousy and alleged adultery, with controversy surrounding two men, a woman, and a child, and in both novels, no proof of adultery is ever confirmed. Furthermore, Félix's and Bento's jealousy lead them to a similar path,

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<sup>24</sup>*Ressurreição* is the only one of Machado's novel which has not yet been translated into English.

that is, they both lose the love and companionship of the women they love. The theme of jealousy is an important one in Machado's opus. Helen Caldwell has pointed out that it appears in twenty-eight of Machado's short stories, plays, and articles. She also notes that jealousy "has a fat part in seven of his nine novels," and that "the plots of ten stories turn upon the ugly passion" (Introduction 1). Machado announces in the Foreword to *Ressurreição* that his idea for the novel came from a Shakespearean quote ("Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt") and from his desire to dramatize it, thus intentionally creating a story which moves around this central theme. In this novel, this 'ugly passion' functions to drive the plot forward in the form of Félix's doubts and suspicions regarding Lívia's affection and fidelity.

However, Machado, in dramatizing the different ways doubt works on the psyche, also explores the intricate relationship between jealousy and verisimilitude. Félix is incapable of distinguishing what *is* real from what may *seem* real, and at the end of the novel claims that "a verossimilhança do fato bastava para lhe dar razão" (I 107) [the verisimilitude of the fact was enough to make him right]. Bento, the protagonist of *Dom Casmurro*, will make a similar claim thirty years later: "verossimilhança... é muita vez toda a verdade" (I 738) [verisimilitude... is often all the truth].<sup>25</sup>

The concept of verisimilitude is central to an understanding of Machado's opus, since so many of his novels orbit around this issue. As he matured as a writer, his female

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<sup>25</sup>Verisimilitude has found different equivalents among translators. John Gledson, in his translation of *Dom Casmurro*, translates verissimilhança as appearance, while Helen Caldwell uses the equivalent 'verisimilitude.' However, in rendering the above passage, both translator's find it difficult to translate the economical but efficient paradox presented in the claim. Gledson translates it as "appearance is often the whole of the truth" (21), while Caldwell translates it as "verisimilitude – which is usually all that truth is" (21). While Machado's idea is present in both translations, the connection between verisimilitude and truth is not as shocking as it is in the original. My own versions, presented above, lose some of the connection also.

characters specially would become famous for their ability to dissimulate and to exist between the world of reality and that of plausibility. The similarities between *Ressurreição* and *Don Casmurro* have brought together these two novels in the eyes of the critics, who find reassurance of their reading of *Don Casmurro* in this earlier novel.<sup>26</sup> Those who claim Capitú's innocence find consolation in Félix's rabid jealousy, while those who side with Bento read Livia as a prototype for Capitú. Whether or not our reading of *Ressurreição* seconds our reading of *Don Casmurro*, one thing is certain: Livia is, in a certain sense, a prototype for Capitú, as well as for Sílvia, Helena, Iaiá, and so many other Machadian female characters. By suggesting this I do not mean to suggest that Livia's guilt or innocence should save or condemn future heroines, but simply that in this first novel Machado begins experimenting with his Dickensian prototype, despite minor differences between Machado's Livia and Dickens' Nancy.

*Ressurreição*, in this sense, emerges as an important text in its own right. In this novel, where the problem of dissimulation (or the suspicion of it) drives the plot forward and constitutes essential female characterization, Machado applies techniques learned from Dickens to create a world where perception and reality are constantly battling for supremacy. In the end, however, these attempts ultimately fail, as the amateur novelist cannot refrain from intervening in the development of the plot, in ascertaining Livia's innocence, and in unmasking Félix as villain and solely responsible for both his and Livia's unhappiness.

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<sup>26</sup>Helen Caldwell, for example, bases Capitú's – Bento's wife - innocence on the fact that Livia was also innocent. Charles Param, on the other hand, has asserted that Félix's jealousy, in comparison to Bento's, is very moderate, and thus of a different sort. See Helen Caldwell's *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis: a Study of Dom Casmurro* (Berkeley: U California P, 1960) and Charles Param's "Jealousy in the Novels of Machado de Assis" in *Hispania* V.53, N.2 (May 1970) pp. 198-206.

However, if in Dickens' novel the reader is able to find some assurance of Nancy's moral constitution in her behavior, in *Ressurreição* the reader is constantly being pulled in different directions regarding Livia's fidelity and mysterious past. From the outset of the novel, her character is shrouded in mystery and intrigue, and for everyone of her actions, the narrator or Félix provides a possible ulterior motive. Though in the end, like Dickens, Machado arranges for Livia an 'appropriate' ending (Nancy dies, Livia goes into social seclusion), for most of the novel it is unclear whether Félix's suspicions are founded or not.

The juxtaposition of the narrator's and Félix's assessment of character dominate the entire narrative, and though they at times seem to intersect, as is the case with Cecília, more often than not they will pull at opposite ends of the narrative. While Félix suspects that behind Raquel's compliments to Livia lies "uma afetação de modéstia" [a modest affectation], the narrator insists on her "absoluta ingenuidade" (41) [absolute ingenuousness]; the narrator sees in Livia "uma natural majestade, que não era rigidez convencional e afetada" [a natural majesty, which was not a conventional and affected rigidity] while Félix's impression is of "uma alma altiva e desdenhosa" (41) [an arrogant and disdainful soul].

The succession of chapters serves to emphasize this contrast as, on the one hand, Félix's jealousy increases until he ultimately calls off the wedding, while on the other hand, Livia suffers and struggles to provide Félix with assurance of her love. At the end of the novel, the narrator cannot help but relieve the reader of any suspicion, by declaring Livia's innocence and revealing Luís Batista to be the author of the calumnious letter which accused her of adultery. He adds, however, that this mattered little to Félix, who

still believed, not necessarily in Livia's guilt, but in the verisimilitude of it. For him, that alone was reason enough not to pursue matrimony.

Unlike Dickens, however, Machado does not give his female characters in *Ressurreição* much voice and stage presence. Nancy's ability to dissimulate in *Oliver Twist* not only occupies much of the novel, but is also central to the novel's development. Because she is for the first several chapters of Dickens' novel either inconsequential or evil, no one expects the overall shift in her behavior and role in the novel. When Nancy is first introduced in chapter 9, she is introduced second – after Bet – and is equaled to her companion in every manner, as Dickens retains the third person plural pronoun. Their appearance accrues no textual importance and serves only to emphasize Oliver's naiveté regarding his new surroundings. When Nancy appears again, in chapter 13, she emerges from the background as Fagin singles her out to go and retrieve Oliver from the police station. Her ability to dissemble ill will with false solicitude is first displayed for the amusement of Fagin and friends:

"Oh, my brother! My poor, dear, sweet, innocent little brother!" exclaimed Nancy, bursting into tears, and wringing the little basket and the street-door key in an agony of distress. "What has become of him! Where have they taken him to! Oh, do have pity, and tell me what's been done with the dear boy, gentlemen; do, gentlemen, if you please, gentlemen!" Having uttered these words in a most lamentable and heart-broken tone to the immeasurable delight of her hearers, Miss Nancy paused, winked to the company, nodded smilingly round, and disappeared. (93)

It is important to understand that Dickens, instead of creating 'flat' characters as Henry James suggested, expresses psychological depth through other means. Malcolm Andrews, for example, argues that Dickens "invites the reader to infer an interior life by intelligent reading of prolific visual and auditory details" (72). Thus, in Nancy, both the visual, in chapter 9, and the auditory, in chapter 13 contribute to establishing in her

character another source of malevolence in the novel. The sarcasm implicit in the title of chapter 15 (“Showing how very fond of Oliver Twist the merry old Jew and Miss Nancy were”) further drives this point, since there are no distinctions between Nancy’s and Fagin’s feelings towards Oliver. Through her next several appearances, until her disclosure of Oliver’s secret in chapter 40, Nancy will remain in the background, becoming weaker and weaker as the novel progresses. Her textual connection to either Fagin or Sikes will lock her in malevolence, or so the reader is to imagine, considering her earlier outburst and conciliatory words to Oliver the exceptions to her moral constitution. However, Dickens creates in Nancy a character who is able to dissimulate her true feelings without raising the suspicions of even the most observant observer: lynx-eyed Fagin.

The passages describing Fagin’s interrogation and questioning of Nancy’s position vis-à-vis his interests and Oliver are numerous, and through every one of them Nancy is able to pull through without giving away her secret. Not Fagin, Oliver, or even the reader can be certain that Nancy has changed and is planning to help Oliver. While some of her actions seem to indicate so, her ability to dissuade Fagin serves also to dissuade the reader as well of her intentions. The first of these occurrences, in chapter 19, takes place as Fagin and Sikes discuss the robbery and the use of little Oliver in it. Because of her earlier outburst, Fagin is a bit weary of conversing in front of Nancy. However, the young woman is able to convince him that she was “true and earnest” to the matters at hand. First she convinces Sikes of keeping her in the room, where she could hear about the plans Fagin and Sikes had for Oliver. As Sikes considers Fagin’s request to ask Nancy to leave, she “burst into a loud laugh; and, swallowing a glass of brandy,

shook her head with an air of defiance, and burst into sundry exclamations of "Keep the game a-going!" "Never say die!" and the like. These seemed to have the effect of reassuring both gentlemen" (136). Once she is allowed to stay, Nancy retains an air of distraction, which allows her to be in the room without appearing interested in the matters being discussed: she sits "with her eyes fixed upon the fire, as if she had been deaf to all that passed" (135). Fagin, however, still not convinced of her fidelity, searches her eyes as he is about to leave. "Their eyes met, and the Jew scrutinized her ...There was no flinching about the girl. She was as true and earnest in the matter as Toby Crackit himself could be" (138).

Because Fagin is more likely to see through Nancy's moral agitation, it is important that she is able to assuage him of her moral standings more than once. On another occasion, when Fagin accidentally makes it known the financial value the young boy had for him, he tries to ascertain Nancy's knowledge on the subject:

"Nancy, dear!" croaked the Jew, in his usual voice. "Did you mind me, dear?"

"Don't worry me now, Fagin!" replied the girl...

"Regarding this boy, my dear?" said the Jew, rubbing the palms of his hands nervously together.

"The boy must take his chance with the rest," interrupted Nancy...

"And about what I was saying, my dear?" observed the Jew, keeping his glistening eye steadily upon her.

"You must say it all over again, if it's anything you want me to do," rejoined Nancy; "and if it is, you had better wait till to-morrow. You put me up for a minute; but now I'm stupid again."

Fagin put several other questions: all with the same drift of ascertaining whether the girl had profited by his unguarded hints; but, she answered them so readily, and was withal so utterly unmoved by his searching looks, that his original impression of her being more than a trifle in liquor, was confirmed... Mr. Fagin, who had had considerable experience of such matters in his time, saw, with great satisfaction, that she was very far gone indeed. (176)

Her dissimulation is so complete that Fagin can leave Nancy feeling confident of his secret and even compelled to make a comment or two about the nature of morality in women like Nancy. "The worst of these women is," he ponders, "that a very little thing



serves to call up some long-forgotten feeling.” On the other hand, though, he adds confidently, “the best of them is, that it never lasts” (177).

On the other hand, Félix, unlike Fagin, is not interested in unraveling the truth – and even disregards it as of very little importance at the end of the novel. He much prefers to allow his perception of the world to dictate to him how to interpret the actions of those surrounding him. As such, Félix is more than satisfied with accepting his distorted version of the truth as plausible absolute truth. As such, he can make a similar statement regarding Livia’s feelings, who he has convinced himself only dissimulates and feigns affection. Once he seduces her and discovers that she has a son, Félix is overcome with guilt and remorse.

— Fui longe demais, ia ele dizendo consigo; não devia alimentar uma paixão que há de ser uma esperança, e uma esperança que não pode ser outra coisa mais que um infortúnio. Que lhe posso eu dar que corresponda ao seu amor? O meu espírito, se quiser, a minha educação, a minha ternura, só isso... porque o amor... Eu amar? Pôr a existência toda nas mãos de uma criatura estranha... e mais do que a existência, o destino, sei eu o que isso é?... (55)

[I went too far, he was telling himself, I shouldn’t feed a passion which will be a hope, and hope cannot be anything other than misfortune. What can I give her that will correspond to her love? My spirit, if she wants, my respect, my tenderness, only this... because love... Love, I? To put existence all in the hands of a strange creature... and even more than existence, destiny, do I know what that is?... ]

However, his feelings are quickly dispersed, as he convinces himself that it is not he, but Livia who dissembles, and that if she expressed herself with too much passion, it is merely out of habit.

—Mas, enfim, é uma questão de forma; creio que ela sente da mesma maneira que eu. Devia tê-lo percebido. Fala com muita paixão, é verdade; mas naturalmente sabe a sua arte... Não me anda ela a seduzir há tanto tempo?... E eu a imaginar que... (55)

[But, in the end, it is a question of form; I believe that she feels the same way as I do. I should have perceived it. She speaks with much passion, it is true, but naturally she knows her art... Has she not been seducing me for long time? And I was thinking that...]

By the time Félix reaches his home, he has managed to convince himself that Livia's affection was a "mistura da vaidade, capricho e pendor sensual" (55) [mixture of vanity, capriciousness, and sensual disposition]. The narrator, however, intervening on Livia's behalf, assures the readers that she "não dissimulava nem hesitava; deixava transparecer no rosto o que sentia no coração" (56) [did not dissimulate nor hesitate; she let show on her face what she felt in her heart].

Félix's insistence on the verisimilitude of the facts is another sign of the way the narrative of the novel forces upon it a tension between Livia's alleged dissimulation and Félix's jealousy. In the end, even her retreat to the country and isolation from society will strike him as a possible dissimulation. The narrator, perhaps because such a claim is absurd, does nothing to dissuade the reader from believing Félix.

The reader, however, cannot rely on the narrator to distinguish truth from fiction, since he, like Félix, insists on the verisimilitude of events. From the outset of the novel, it is easy to recognize that the narrator needs to infuse the reader with suspicion – suspicion that he is not privy to characters' real thoughts and feelings, and as such, also unable to distinguish what is from what appears to be, that is, verisimilitude from truth. Thus, when he describes, for example, how Cecília refuses Félix's offer for financial support, and in turn Félix's assumption that her refusal was based on the prospects of a future lover, the reader - who has been conditioned by the narrator's characterization of Félix as callous and cynical – places no importance on Félix's judgment and attributes to Cecília's action

a genuine sentiment of pride and broken-heartedness. When consoled by Meneses, Cecília pledges her undying love for Félix, at which point the narrator intervenes:

O juramento de Cecília não devia valer muito aos olhos de um homem que conhecesse bem todos os recursos de uma mulher naquelas condições. Mas o nosso Meneses era ingênuo em cousas tais. (39)

[Cecilia's pledge should not hold much value in the eyes of a man who knew well all the recourses of a woman in that condition. But our Meneses was naïve in such things].

The narrator's claim serves to bridge the gap created by Félix's assessment of Cecília and the reader's assessment of Félix: though the reader may have assumed Cecília's innocence, now the reader suspects, like Félix, that she may have ulterior motives. This turns out to be the case, since in a matter of two weeks she becomes involved with Moreirinha, causing Félix to describe her fidelity as

uma fidelidade filha do costume; a sua máxima era não esquecer o amante presente, não recordar o amante passado, nem se preocupar com o amante futuro. (46)

[a fidelity out of a habit; her maxim was not to forget the present lover, not to remember the former lover, nor to worry about the future lover].

Unlike Nancy, however, whose ability to disguise her real intentions is constantly being tested, Livia's is never really under the spotlight. Though Machado does not seem to give his female characters in *Ressurreição* much voice and stage presence, it is worth noting that the narrator, though thoroughly convinced of Livia's innocence, seems to place on her a certain degree of culpability. The chapter following Félix's declaration, appropriately titled "O Gavião e a Pombo," while serving to position, on the one hand, Livia's love and trust in direct opposition to Félix's indifference and jest, serves, on the other hand, to foreground the role-reversal depicted in chapter 14. Commenting on the current situation of Moreirinha's affair with Cecília, Félix makes the following

assessment: “A rola fizera-se gavião, pela única razão de que Moreirinha lhe dera ensejo de conhecer a própria força” (77) [The dove turned into a hawk, merely because Moreirinha gave her an opportunity to know her own power]. Not only are Félix’s words a direct prediction of his own reversal of fortune, but they also stress a direct relation between Moreirinha (and his) despair and Cecília’s (and Lívia’s) recognition of her own power over the feelings of her partner. In Cecília’s case, this power arises out of Moreirinha’s constant regaling of affection. For Lívia, however, who has only enjoyed Félix’s discreet love, this power is more complicated and difficult to pinpoint. While Cecília seems fully aware that she, not Moreirinha, holds the reigns of their relationship, Lívia, on the other hand, is constantly victimized by Félix’s unjustified suspicions. If we consider the fact that it is she, not Félix, who first introduces jealousy as a possible reason for separation, and that once this suggestion is made, Félix’s jealousy – which until then had been absent from the novel – escalates with violent rapidity, we might consider Lívia’s power of suggestion, as well as that of the narrator’s, to be at the crux of the novel.

While *Ressurreição* dramatizes how doubt makes one lose the good one might win, it also demonstrates how, in his fictional debut, Machado began shrouding his characters and narrative alike with degrees of dissimilitude. Thirty years after its publication, Machado would return to this problem in *Dom Casmurro*, a novel which has caused much debate among critics. In both these novels we are presented with female characters – Lívia and Capitú – whose motives and actions are constantly muddled by ambiguity of gesture and emotion. Whether unfairly, as is the case with Lívia, or perhaps justifiably, as many would argue is the case with Capitú, Machado applies the techniques

of dissimulation learned from Dickens in order to create characters who stupefy readers and other characters alike. In *Dom Casmurro*, Machado has mastered these techniques, and no longer feel the need to solve the novel for the reader: he discredits both an argument for the provable guilt or provable innocence of Capitú, thus branding his novel with an intrinsic ambiguity. If Capitú dissembles, she does it so completely that only her creator can attest to it.

## Conclusion

The place of Machado de Assis' translation of Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* in his career as a novelist has been underestimated. Too often regarded as hackwork, Machado's close relationship with the original text provided him both with an opportunity to give voice to certain current cultural misconceptions regarding the value of all that is foreign as well as contemporary tendencies which insisted on a certain type of Brazilianness through the misappropriation of Dickens' novel. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the text of *Oliver Twist* served in many ways as the drawing room in which Machado began sketching an important aspect of his future publications, that of dissimulation.

Thus, *Oliveira Twist* should be considered as Machado's first step into the world of the novel. This translation, as a text in its own right, more than any other text from his early years, demonstrates a clear engagement with current themes and polemics. Through his procedures as a translator of Dickens, one can detect a set of idiosyncratic decisions which are guided by different social and political norms. As Machado engages these norms, he imposes on Dickens' text modifications which, in the end, reveal much more about the translator and his position in nineteenth-century Brazil, than about the text itself.

This type of inquiry is essential in bringing light to Machado's deep engagement with Brazilian themes and perception of 'Brazilianness' as not necessarily restricted to local color and issues. As he domesticates the text of *Oliver Twist*, transforming it into a text which exists between two worlds – that of the foreign and that of the national – he offers an alternative to the problematic creation of a uniquely Brazilian literature. Neither insisting nor restricting art to its nationalistic borders, but instead positioning all that is national in constant dialogue with the foreign world, Machado's views and position vis-à-vis the nationalistic debate are clearly a part of the text of *Oliveira Twist*.

Also present in this translation is a critique of what would later be called by Roberto Schwartz 'the misplaced ideas.' The incongruous adoption of liberal ideals in a slavocratic society becomes both a struggle in which Machado chooses not to participate, out of personal fears regarding his racial background, and, by the same token, an absurd concept which he cannot yet denounce, for its lack of roots in Brazilian soil. For all of his success as a poet and folhetinista, Machado's omissions of passages in Dickens' novel dealing with human bondage betray perhaps Machado's precarious position in the intellectual life of Rio de Janeiro. His reluctance to implicate himself in issues of abolition and the cruelty of slavery would remain a constant throughout his writing career. However, it is interesting and extremely telling that Machado's fear was so immense that even expressing the discomfort of others – in this case, Dickens – proved too risky for him.

Though Machado abandoned the translation of *Oliver Twist*, he never left behind the techniques he learned while translating it. With the impulse to write a novel of his own came also the decision to brand his work with the indelible mark of dissimulation.

*Ressurreição*, his first novel, represents Machado's first involvement with this important aspect of his future novels. Dickens' text, still fresh in his mind, dictates, to a large degree, how Machado should dramatize doubt, and how he should shroud his characters with the ability to dissimulate. In the character of Nancy Machado finds a prototype for all his future heroines and her ability to hide her true self and intentions from others becomes a constant in his novels.

As such, the text of *Ressurreição*, revisited and considered from a different perspective, accrues importance as a text in its own right. In this early novel Machado begins experimenting with a type in ways which cannot be dismissed as the work of an amateur novelist. From the outset of his career, we find in Machado's writing a constant tension between the real world and the perceived one, between truth and verisimilitude. The story of the failed romance between Félix and Lívia, brought to an end because of Félix's jealousy and Lívia's alleged dissimulation not only serves as the perfect background for Machado to exercise his newly acquired skills, but would later serve as prototype for his perhaps greatest work, *Don Casmurro*.



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